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Lin et al.

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(54) **PORTABLE ELECTRONIC DEVICE**

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G02F 1/1335 (2006.01)
G02F 1/153 (2006.01)
G02F 1/19 (2006.01)

(52) **U.S. Cl.**

CPC **G02F 1/163** (2013.01); **G02F 1/157** (2013.01); **G02F 1/133602** (2013.01); **G02F 1/15** (2013.01); **G02F 1/153** (2013.01); **G02F 1/19** (2013.01); **G02F 2001/134345** (2013.01); **G09G 3/3406** (2013.01); **G09G 2300/08** (2013.01); **G09G 2310/027** (2013.01); **G09G 2310/0256** (2013.01); **G09G 2310/0262**

(58) **Field of Classification Search**

CPC *G09G 3/3406*; *G09G 2320/0233*; *G09G 2320/0626*; *G09G 2310/027*; *G09G 2320/0238*; *G09G 2300/08*; *G09G 2310/0256*; *G09G 2310/0262*; *G02F 1/19*; *G02F 2001/134345*; *G02F 1/15*; *G02F 1/53*; *G02F 1/157*; *G02F 1/133602*; *G02B 21/361*
USPC 348/335, 363, 376; 455/566; 345/49, 345/214, 690, 697; 250/229, 227.2, 216, 250/239; 359/265–275
See application file for complete search history.

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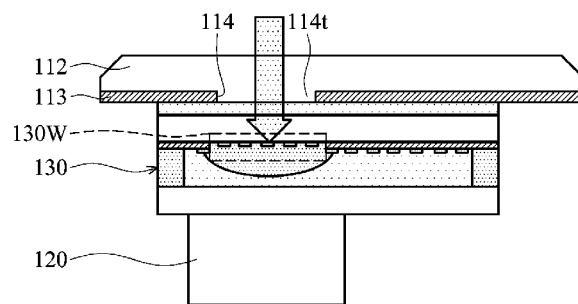
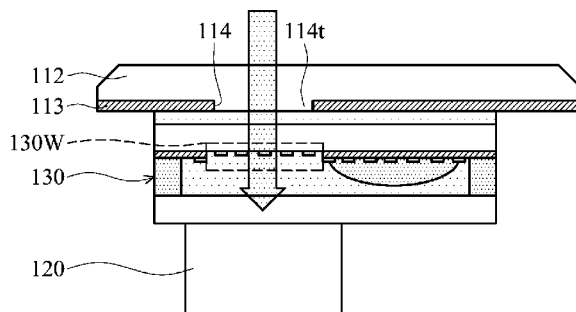
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(57) **ABSTRACT**

A portable electronic device is provided, including a housing, a display module, an optical element and a switchable layer. The housing has a first surface and an opaque layer disposed under the first surface, the opaque layer having a first aperture and a second aperture. The display module is disposed under the first surface and overlapped with the first aperture. The optical element is disposed under the opaque layer. The switchable layer is disposed between the optical element and the second aperture and overlapping the second aperture, wherein the switchable layer is capable of being switched between a substantially opaque state and a substantially transparent state. The substantially opaque state prevents viewing of the optical element through the switchable layer and the substantially transparent state allows viewing of the optical element through the switchable layer.

20 Claims, 10 Drawing Sheets



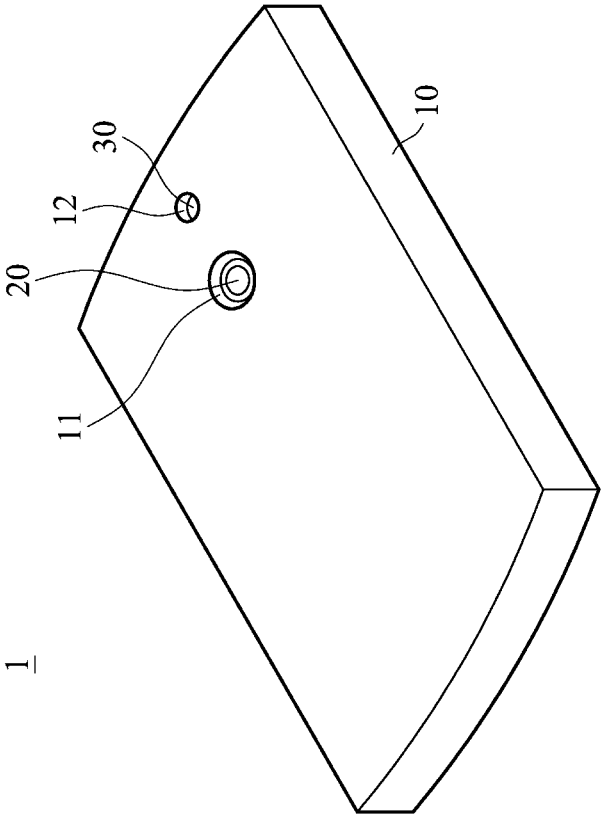


FIG. 1

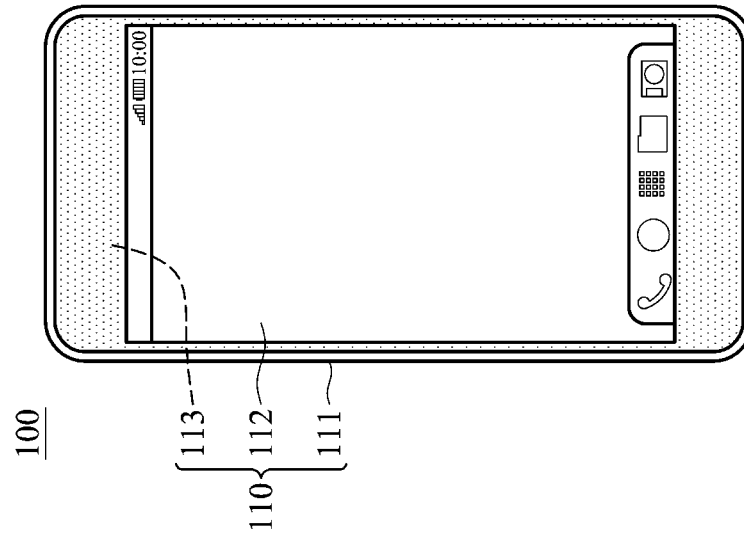


FIG. 2B

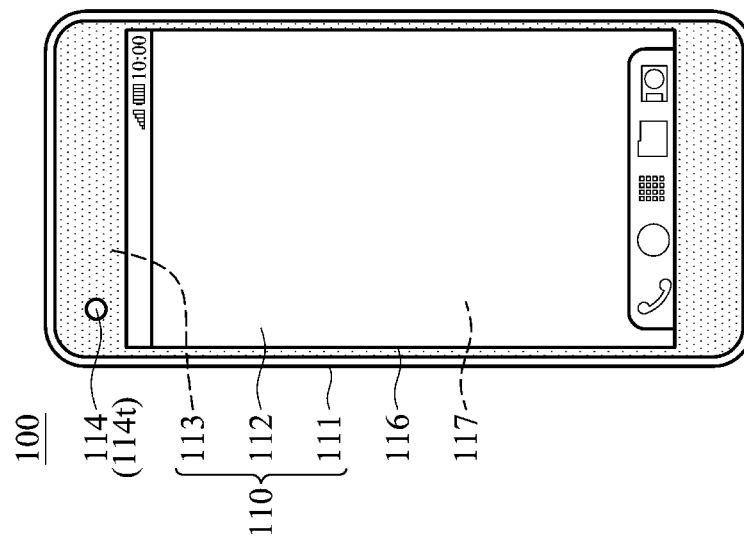


FIG. 2A

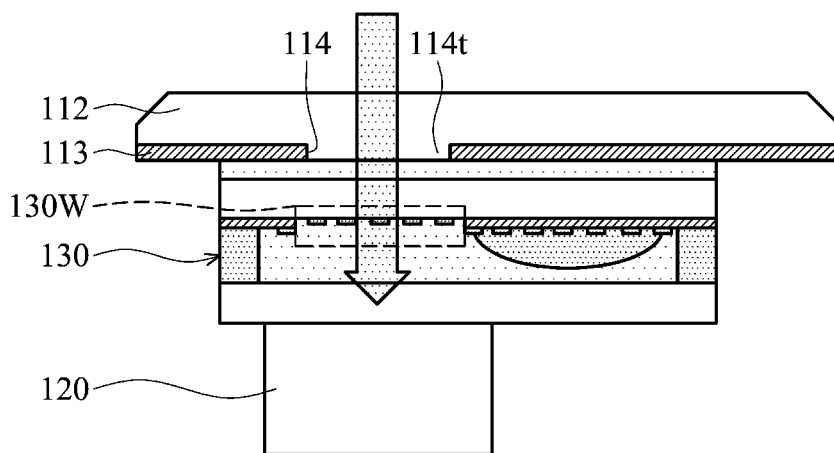


FIG. 3A

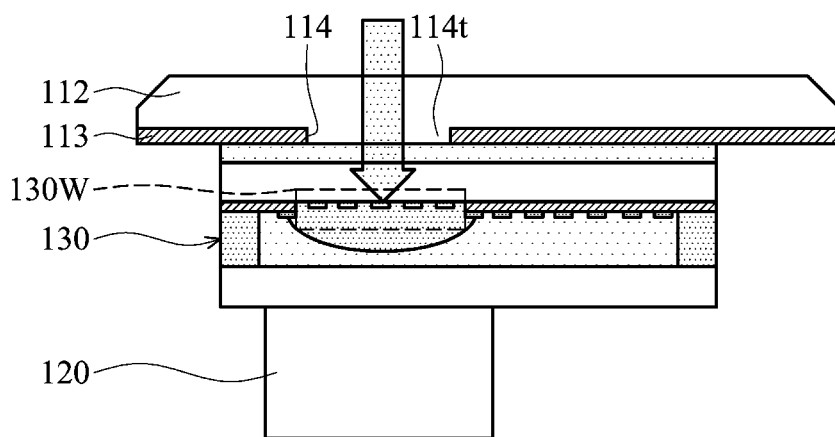


FIG. 3B

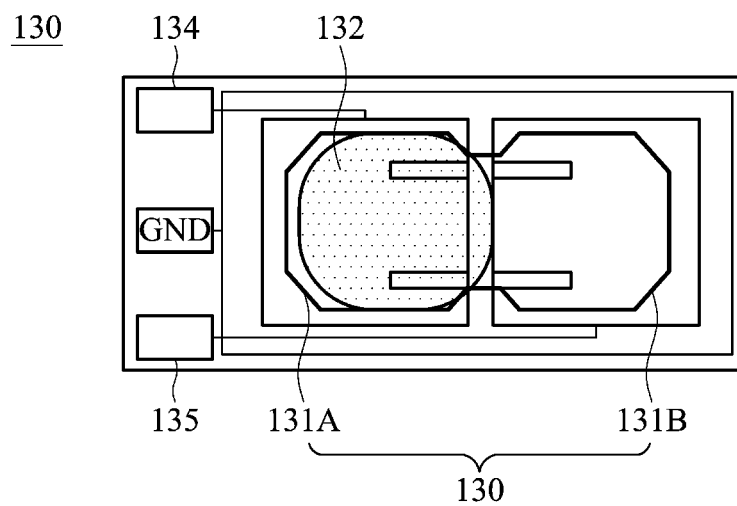


FIG. 4A

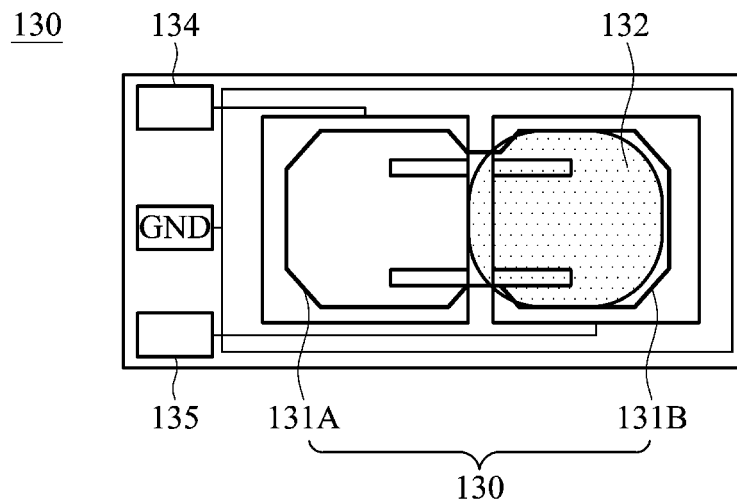


FIG. 4B

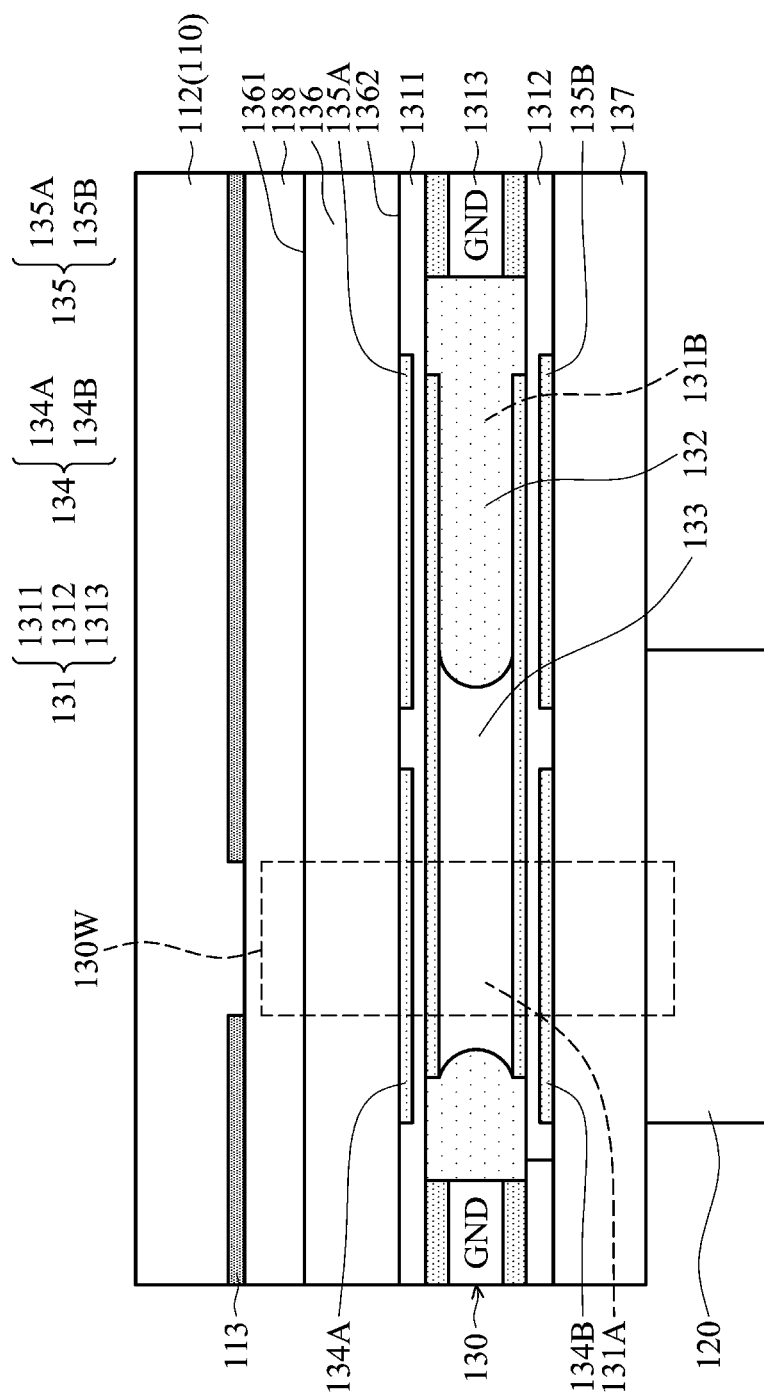


FIG. 4C

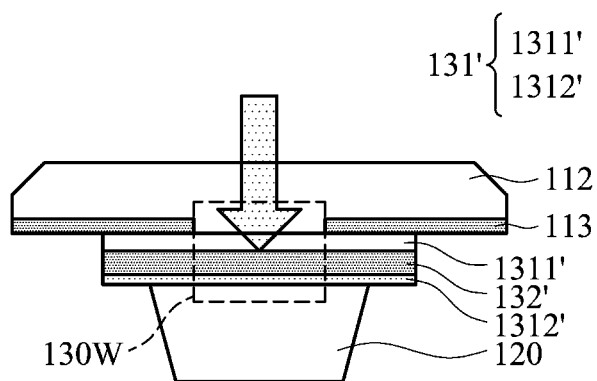


FIG. 5A

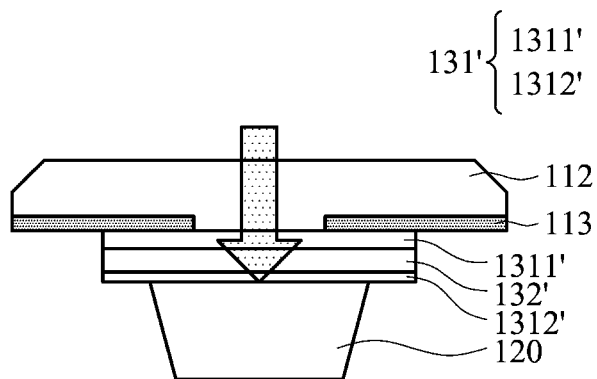


FIG. 5B

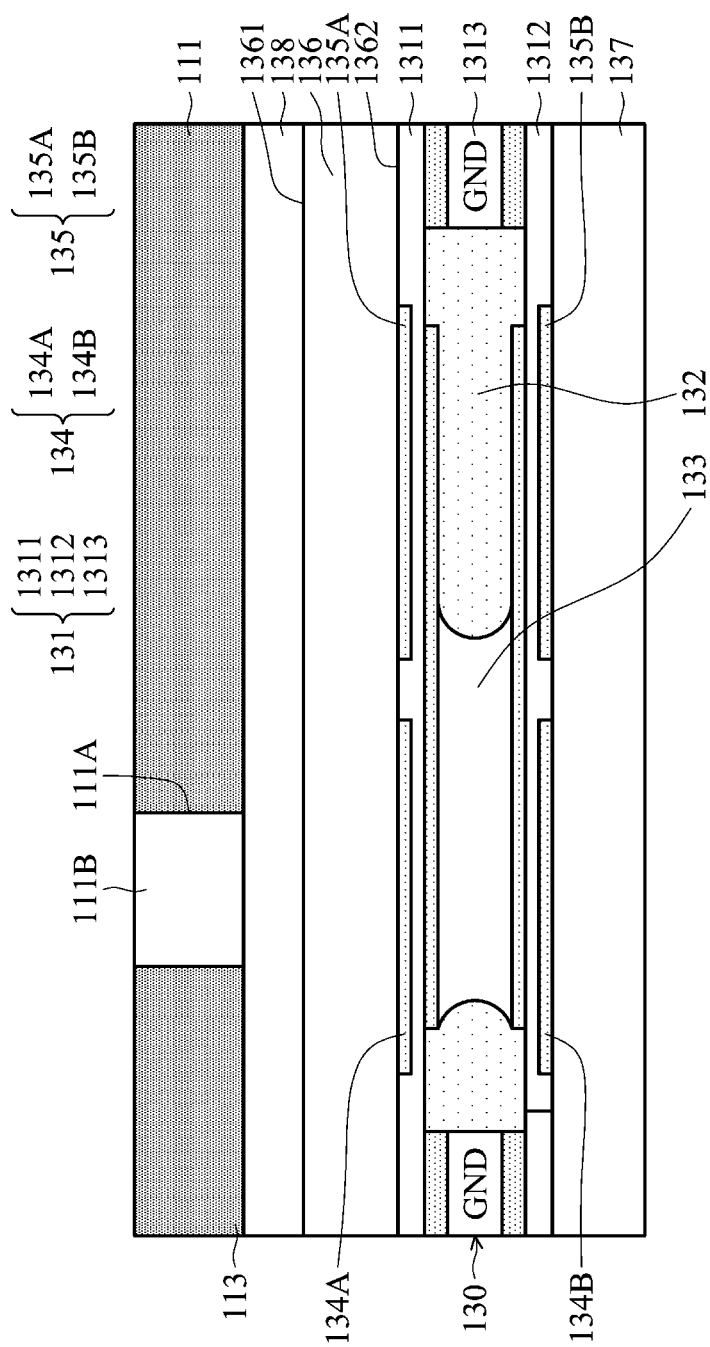


FIG. 6

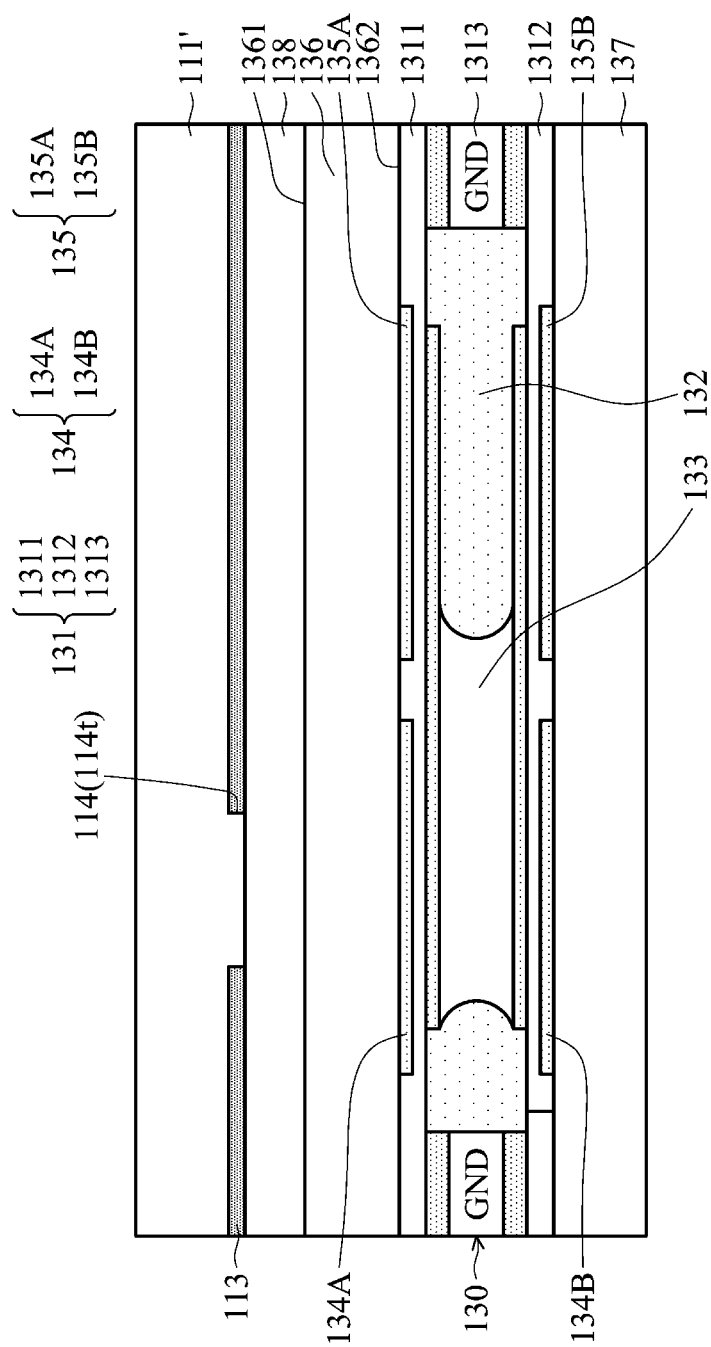


FIG. 7

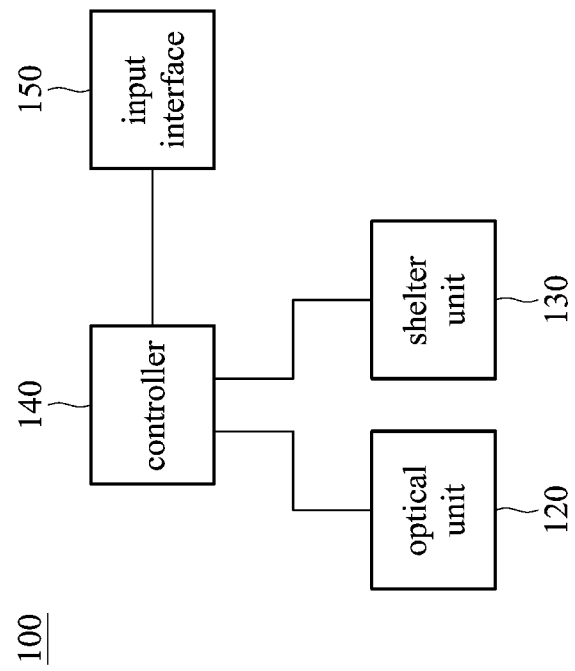


FIG. 8

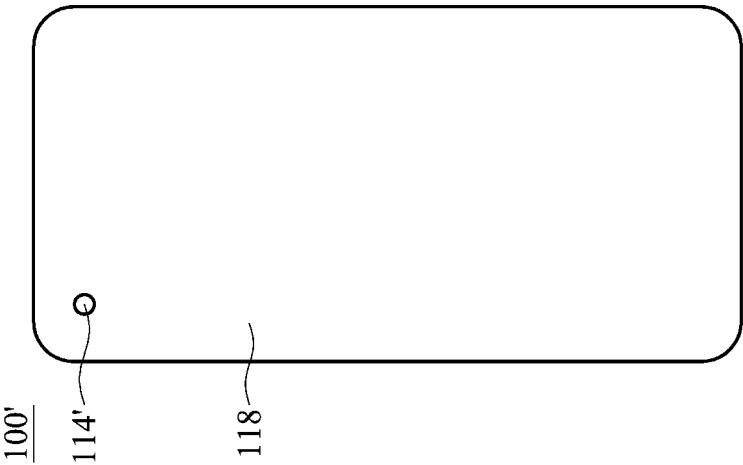


FIG. 9

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PORTABLE ELECTRONIC DEVICE**CROSS REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS****1. Field of the Invention**

The present invention relates to a portable electronic device, and in particular, relates to a portable electronic device with an optical element such as image sensor or flashlight.

2. Description of the Related Art

FIG. 1 shows a conventional portable electronic device (smart phone) 1, which comprises a housing 10, a camera 20 and a flashlight 30. Conventionally, a camera opening 11 and a flashlight opening 12 are formed on the housing 10. Therefore, the camera 20 can capture images through the camera opening 11, and the light provided by the flashlight 30 is emitted through the flashlight opening 12.

However, the camera opening 11 and the flashlight opening 12 may not be aesthetically pleasing when applied to the conventional portable electronic device 1, and thus, decreases the attraction of the portable electronic device 1 to consumers.

BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

In one embodiment of the invention, a portable electronic device is provided. The portable electronic device includes a housing, a display module, an optical element and a switchable layer. The housing has a first surface and an opaque layer disposed under the first surface, the opaque layer having a first aperture and a second aperture. The display module is disposed under the first surface and overlapped with the first aperture. The optical element is disposed under the opaque layer. The switchable layer is disposed between the optical element and the second aperture and overlapping the second aperture, wherein the switchable layer is capable of being switched between a substantially opaque state and a substantially transparent state. The substantially opaque state prevents viewing of the optical element through the switchable layer and the substantially transparent state allows viewing of the optical element through the switchable layer.

Utilizing the portable electronic device of the embodiment of the invention, the optical unit (image sensor or light emitter) is disposed behind the front panel. Additionally, in the substantially opaque state, the optical unit is hidden and invisible. Therefore, the aesthetic appearance of the portable electronic device is improved.

A detailed description is given in the following embodiments with reference to the accompanying drawings.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

The present invention can be more fully understood by reading the subsequent detailed description and examples with references made to the accompanying drawings, wherein:

FIG. 1 shows a conventional portable electronic device;

FIG. 2A shows a portable electronic device of the first embodiment of the invention, wherein the switchable layer is in the substantially transparent state;

FIG. 2B shows a portable electronic device of the first embodiment of the invention, wherein the switchable layer is in the substantially opaque state;

FIG. 3A shows a detailed structure of the optical element and the switchable layer of the embodiments of the invention, wherein the switchable layer is in the substantially transparent state;

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FIG. 3B shows a detailed structure of the optical element and the switchable layer of the embodiments of the invention, wherein the switchable layer is in the substantially opaque state;

FIG. 4A is a top view of the switchable layer of the embodiments of the invention, wherein the switchable layer is in the substantially opaque state;

FIG. 4B is a top view of the switchable layer of the embodiments of the invention, wherein the switchable layer is in the substantially transparent state;

FIG. 4C shows a detailed structure of the switchable layer of the embodiments of the invention;

FIG. 5A shows another embodiment of the switchable layer of the embodiments of the invention, wherein the switchable layer is in the substantially opaque state;

FIG. 5B shows the switchable layer of the embodiment of FIG. 5A, wherein the switchable layer is in the substantially transparent state;

FIG. 6 shows a portable electronic device of the second embodiment of the invention;

FIG. 7 shows a portable electronic device of the third embodiment of the invention;

FIG. 8 is a block diagram of the portable electronic device of the embodiments of the invention; and

FIG. 9 shows a modified example of the embodiment of the invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

The following description is of the best-contemplated mode of carrying out the invention. This description is made for the purpose of illustrating the general principles of the invention and should not be taken in a limiting sense. The scope of the invention is best determined by reference to the appended claims.

FIGS. 2A and 2B show a portable electronic device 100 of a first embodiment of the invention, which comprises a housing 110, an optical element 120 (Refer to FIGS. 3A and 3B), a switchable layer 130 (Refer to FIGS. 3A and 3B) and a display module 117. The housing 110 comprises a body 111, a front panel 112 and an opaque layer 113, wherein the front panel 112 is connected to the body 111, and the opaque layer 113 is printed on an inner side of the front panel 112. The housing 110 has a first surface, which is on the first panel 112. The front panel 112 is transparent, comprising of glass or plastic. A first aperture 116 and a second aperture 114 are formed on the opaque layer 113. The second aperture 114 is defined as a transparent portion 114a. The display module 117 is disposed under the first surface and overlapped with the first aperture 116.

Refer to FIGS. 3A and 3B, which are detailed structures of the optical element 120 and the switchable layer 130. The optical element 120 corresponds to the transparent portion 114a, which can be an image sensor or a flashlight. When the optical element 120 is an image sensor, the optical element 120 is capable to capture image through the transparent portion 114a. When the optical element 120 is a flashlight, the optical element 120 is capable to emitting light through the transparent portion 114a. In this embodiment, the optical element 120 is an image sensor. In one embodiment, the optical element 120 comprises a transfective sheet. In one embodiment, the optical element 120 comprises a printed logo, emblem, mark, shape, or alphanumeric characters.

Refer to FIGS. 3A and 3B, the switchable layer 130 is disposed between the optical unit 120 and the transparent portion 114a, wherein the switchable layer 130 comprises a window 130W corresponding to the transparent portion 114a.

When the switchable layer **130** is in a substantially opaque state (FIGS. 2B and 3B), the window **130W** is colored to visually shelter the optical element **120** (Refer to FIG. 2B, the optical element **120** is sheltered and invisible). When the portable electronic device **100** is switched to an image capturing mode, the switchable layer **130** is switched from the substantially opaque state to a substantially transparent state (FIGS. 2A and 3A) allowing a light to pass through the window **130W** (Refer to FIG. 2A, the optical element **120** can be seen). The substantially opaque state prevents viewing of the optical element **120** through the switchable layer and the substantially transparent state allows viewing of the optical element **120** through the switchable layer.

Utilizing the portable electronic device of the embodiment of the invention, the optical unit (image sensor or light emitter) is disposed behind the front panel. Additionally, in the substantially opaque state, the optical unit is hidden and invisible. Therefore, the aesthetic appearance of the portable electronic device is improved.

Refer to FIGS. 4A, 4B and 4C, in one embodiment, the switchable layer **130** comprises a chamber **131**, an opaque liquid **132**, a second liquid **133**, a first electrode assembly **134** and a second electrode assembly **135**. The chamber **131** comprises a first area **131A** and a second area **131B** (FIGS. 4A and 4B), wherein the window **130W** is located in the first area **131A**. The opaque liquid **132** is within the chamber **131**, wherein the opaque liquid **132** is colored. The second liquid **133** is within the chamber **131** and does not mix with the opaque liquid **132**, wherein the second liquid **133** is transparent. The first electrode assembly **134** corresponds to the first area **131A**. The second electrode assembly **135** corresponds to the second area **131B**. When the switchable layer **130** is in the substantially opaque state, the opaque liquid **132** is in the first area **131A** (FIG. 4A). When the switchable layer **130** is switched from the substantially opaque state to the substantially transparent state, a voltage is applied to the second electrode assembly **135** to move the opaque liquid **132** from the first area **131A** to the second area **131B** (FIG. 4B).

In the embodiment of FIG. 4C, the opaque liquid **132** is water and the second liquid **133** is oil. The color of the opaque liquid **132** can be the same as the opaque layer **113**. The chamber **131** comprises a first hydrophobic layer **1311**, a second hydrophobic layer **1312** and a side wall **1313**, wherein the side wall **1313** is sandwiched between the first hydrophobic layer **1311** and the second hydrophobic layer **1312**, and the first hydrophobic layer **1311**, the second hydrophobic layer **1312** and the side wall **1313** compose the chamber **131**. The side wall **1313** is grounded. The first electrode assembly **134** comprises a first electrode **134B** and a third electrode **134A**. The first electrode **134B** is disposed on the second substrate **137** and overlapped with the second aperture **114**. The third electrode **134A** is disposed on the first substrate **136** and overlapped with the second aperture **114**. In one embodiment, the first electrode **134B** is transparent.

The first electrode **134B** and the third electrode **134A** are respectively formed on the first hydrophobic layer **1311** and the second hydrophobic layer **1312**. The second electrode assembly **135** comprises a second electrode **135B** and a forth electrode **135A**, which are respectively formed on the first hydrophobic layer **1311** and the second hydrophobic layer **1312**. The second electrode **135B** is disposed on the second substrate **137** and under the opaque layer **113**. The forth electrode **135A** is disposed on the first substrate **136** and under the opaque layer **113**.

The switchable layer **130** is switched to the substantially transparent state by applying electrical potential on the first electrode **134B** so that the opaque liquid configured to move

to the second electrode **135B** and the switchable layer is switched to the substantially opaque state by applying electrical potential on the second electrode **135B** so that the opaque liquid is configured to move to the first electrode **134B**.

In one embodiment, when the optical element **120** configured to generate light, the switchable layer **130** is switched to the substantially transparent state so that the light is transmitted through the switchable layer **130** and the second aperture and when the optical element **120** configured to not generate light, the switchable layer **130** is switched to the substantially opaque state.

In one embodiment, when optical element **120** configured to receive light via the second aperture, the switchable layer **130** is switched to the substantially transparent state so that the light is transmitted through the switchable layer **130** and when the optical element **120** configured to not receive the light, the switchable layer **130** is switched to the substantially opaque state.

In the embodiment of FIG. 4C, the switchable layer **130** further comprises a first substrate **136** and the second substrate **137**, and the chamber **131**, the first electrode assembly **134** and the second electrode assembly **135** are sandwiched between the first substrate **136** and the second substrate **137**. The first substrate **136** is located between the chamber **131** and the front panel **112** (housing **110**), and the second substrate **137** is located between the optical unit **120** and the chamber **131**. The first substrate **136** is attached to an inner surface of the front panel **112** (housing **110**) by an adhesive film **138**. The first substrate **136** comprises a surface **1361** and a surface **1362**, and the surface **1361** and the surface **1362** are coated with anti-reflection layer. With the anti-reflection layer, the light reflection due to optical interfaces is reduced, thereby sheltering effect of the switchable layer **130** is further improved.

Refer to FIGS. 5A and 5B. In another embodiment, the switchable layer **130'** comprises an electrode assembly **131'** and an electro-discoloring layer **132'**. The electro-discoloring layer **132'** is electrically connected to the electrode assembly **131'**, wherein the window **130W** is located in the electro-discoloring layer **132'**. The electrode assembly **131'** can comprise a first electrode **1311'** and a second electrode **1312'**. When the switchable layer **130'** is switched from the substantially opaque state (FIG. 5A) to the substantially transparent state (FIG. 5B), a voltage is applied to the electrode assembly **131'** to discolor the electro-discoloring layer **132'** and to increase light transmittance of the electro-discoloring layer **132'**. When the switchable layer **130'** is in the substantially opaque state (FIG. 5A), the light transmittance of the electro-discoloring layer **132'** is lower than 10%.

In the first embodiment, the optical element and the sheltering element correspond to the front panel of the housing. However, the invention is not limited thereby. The optical element and the sheltering element can also correspond to, for example, the body of the housing. FIG. 6 shows a second embodiment of the invention, wherein the body **111** is formed with opaque material, and an aperture **111A** is formed on the body, and a transparent material **111B** is filled in the aperture **111A** to be the transparent portion.

FIG. 7 shows a third embodiment of the invention, wherein the body **111'** is formed with transparent material, and the opaque layer **113** is printed on an inner surface of the body **111'**, and an second aperture **114** is formed on the opaque layer **113** to be the transparent portion **114f**.

Refer to FIG. 8. The portable electronic device **100** of the embodiment of the invention further comprises a controller **140** and an input interface **150**, wherein the input interface

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150 is coupled to the controller 140, and the controller 140 is coupled to the optical unit 120 and the switchable layer 130, and the controller 140 controls the switchable layer 130 and the optical unit 120 according to an image capturing order from the input interface 150. The portable electronic device 100 switches the switchable layer 130 from the substantially opaque state to the substantially transparent state when the controller 140 receives the image capturing order, and the optical unit 120 is activated.

FIG. 9 shows a portable electronic device 100' of a modified example of the embodiment of the invention, wherein the housing has the first surface (front surface) and a second surface (back surface) 118 disposed opposite to the first surface, wherein the second surface 118 is opaque and has an aperture 114'. In this embodiment, the optical element is disposed under the second surface 118, and the switchable layer is disposed between the optical element and the aperture and overlapping the aperture.

The portable electronic device of the embodiment of the invention can be a mobile phone, tablet computer, notebook or other portable electronic devices. The input interface can be a touch module, keyboard or other input interfaces.

Use of ordinal terms such as "first", "second", "third", etc., in the claims to modify a claim element does not by itself connote any priority, precedence, or order of one claim element over another or the temporal order in which acts of a method are performed, but are used merely as labels to distinguish one claim element having a certain name from another element having a same name (but for use of the ordinal term) to distinguish the claim elements.

While the invention has been described by way of example and in terms of the preferred embodiments, it is to be understood that the invention is not limited to the disclosed embodiments. To the contrary, it is intended to cover various modifications and similar arrangements (as would be apparent to those skilled in the art). Therefore, the scope of the appended claims should be accorded the broadest interpretation so as to encompass all such modifications and similar arrangements.

What is claimed is:

1. A portable electronic device, comprising:
 - a housing, having a first surface and an opaque layer disposed under the first surface, the opaque layer having a first aperture and a second aperture;
 - a display module, disposed under the first surface and overlapped with the first aperture;
 - an optical element, disposed under the opaque layer; and
 - a switchable layer, disposed between the optical element and the second aperture and overlapping the second aperture, wherein the switchable layer is capable of being switched between a substantially opaque state and a substantially transparent state;
 wherein the substantially opaque state prevents viewing of the optical element through the switchable layer and the substantially transparent state allows viewing of the optical element through the switchable layer.
2. The portable electronic device as claimed in claim 1, wherein the optical element comprises a transfective sheet.
3. The portable electronic device as claimed in claim 1, wherein the optical element comprises a printed logo, emblem, mark, or alphanumeric characters.
4. The portable electronic device as claimed in claim 1, wherein the switchable layer further comprises:
 - a first substrate;
 - a second substrate disposed under the first substrate;
 - an opaque liquid disposed between the first substrate and the second substrate;

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- a first electrode disposed on the second substrate and overlapped with the second aperture; and
- a second electrode disposed on the second substrate and under the opaque layer;

wherein the switchable layer is switched to the substantially transparent state by applying electrical potential on the first electrode so that the opaque liquid moves to the second electrode, and the switchable layer is switched to the substantially opaque state by applying electrical potential on the second electrode so that the opaque liquid moves to the first electrode.

5. The portable electronic device as claimed in claim 4, wherein the switchable layer further comprises a third electrode disposed on the first substrate and overlapped with the second aperture and a forth electrode disposed on the first substrate and under the opaque layer.

6. The portable electronic device as claimed in claim 1, wherein when the optical element generates light, the switchable layer is switched to the substantially transparent state so that the light is transmitted through the switchable layer and the second aperture, and when the optical element does not generate light, the switchable layer is switched to the substantially opaque state.

7. The portable electronic device as claimed in claim 1, wherein when optical element receives light via the second aperture, the switchable layer is switched to the substantially transparent state so that the light is transmitted through the switchable layer, and when the optical element does not receive the light, the switchable layer is switched to the substantially opaque state.

8. The portable electronic device as claimed in claim 4, wherein the switchable layer further comprises a first hydrophobic layer disposed on the first substrate, a second hydrophobic layer disposed on the second substrate and a side wall, disposed on the first substrate and extending toward the second substrate, and the opaque liquid is disposed between the side wall, the first substrate and the second substrate.

9. The portable electronic device as claimed in claim 8, wherein the side wall is grounded.

10. The portable electronic device as claimed in claim 4, wherein the first electrode is transparent.

11. The portable electronic device as claimed in claim 1, further comprises an anti-reflection layer disposed between the transparent layer and the switchable layer.

12. The portable electronic device as claimed in claim 1, wherein the switchable layer further comprises a second liquid disposed between the first substrate and the second substrate and the second liquid and the opaque liquid is not mixing.

13. The portable electronic device as claimed in claim 1, wherein the optical element is an image sensor or a light emitter.

14. The portable electronic device as claimed in claim 1, wherein switchable layer comprise a first substrate, a second substrate and electrochromic material disposed between the first substrate and the second substrate.

15. The portable electronic device as claimed in claim 14, wherein the switchable layer is switched to the substantially transparent state by applying electrical potential on the electrochromic material so the electrochromic material is changed to be substantially transparent and the switchable layer is switched to the substantially opaque state by not applying electrical potential on the electrochromic material so the electrochromic material is changed to be substantially opaque.

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16. A portable electronic device, comprising:

a housing, having a first surface and a second surface disposed opposite to the first surface, wherein the second surface is opaque and has an aperture;

a display module, disposed under the first surface;

an optical element, disposed under the second surface; and

a switchable layer, disposed between the optical element and the aperture and overlapping the aperture, wherein the switchable layer is capable of being switched between a substantially opaque state and a substantially transparent state;

wherein the substantially opaque state prevents viewing of the optical element through the switchable layer and the substantially transparent state allows viewing of the optical element through the switchable layer.

17. The portable electronic device as claimed in claim **16**, wherein the switchable layer further comprises:

a first substrate;

a second substrate disposed under the first substrate;

an opaque liquid disposed between the first substrate and the second substrate;

a first electrode disposed on the second substrate and overlapped with the aperture; and

a second electrode disposed on the second substrate and under the second surface;

wherein the switchable layer is switched to the substantially transparent state by applying electrical potential on the first electrode so that the opaque liquid moves to the second electrode, and the switchable layer is

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switched to the substantially opaque state by applying electrical potential on the second electrode so that the opaque liquid moves to the first electrode.

18. The portable electronic device as claimed in claim **16**, wherein when the optical element generates light, the switchable layer is switched to the substantially transparent state so that the light is transmitted through the switchable layer and the second aperture, and when the optical element does not generate light, the switchable layer is switched to the substantially opaque state.

19. The portable electronic device as claimed in claim **16**, wherein when optical element receives light via the second aperture, the switchable layer is switched to the substantially transparent state so that the light is transmitted through the switchable layer, and when the optical element does not receive the light, the switchable layer is switched to the substantially opaque state.

20. The portable electronic device as claimed in claim **16**, wherein switchable layer comprise a first substrate, a second substrate and electrochromic material disposed between the first substrate and the second substrate, wherein the switchable layer is switched to the substantially transparent state by applying electrical potential on the electrochromic material so the electrochromic material is changed to be substantially transparent and the switchable layer is switched to the substantially opaque state by not applying electrical potential on the electrochromic material so the electrochromic material is changed to be substantially opaque.

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